

VOICES & visions



JUNE/JULY 08

SECTION B

*Southeast Conference Edition
United Church News*

Sabbath

By Dorothea Lotze-Kola

Growing up in Germany, there were clear rules about Sundays. You neither wash laundry nor hang it for the neighbors to see. You do not work in the yard and definitely do not buy anything. The stores were closed on Saturdays at noon and did not open until Monday morning. One day as a child I visited my grandmother over the weekend. I knew that there was not much to do, as watching TV was taboo. When I started knitting, my grandmother glared at me saying "Don't you know, knitting on Sunday is sin?" Apparently I had not learned all there was to learn about the Christianized Sabbath law.

Immigrating to the US, there did not seem to be a set apart Sunday time besides cars lining up in the church parking lots in the mornings. Shopping is available all throughout the weekend. No social norms keep people from mowing their lawn or washing their cars on Sundays. I feel partly relieved as nobody seems to care what I am doing. On the other hand I am surprised how I begin to miss the reality that there is a "day a week where things stop and one does without"...

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Conference News and Announcements

Meeting Highlights

Highlights of the Southeast Conference Board of Directors meeting — April 18, 2008.



■ **Cameron Trimble** reported that in the last 10 years the Southeast Conference has worked with 22 new or affiliating congregations, of which 16 continue to be viable churches. She noted that there are three congregations in the Conference considering the possibility of birthing new churches. We have a fully developed a new church development starter kit, and an excellent process of congregational affiliation. If the Conference continues to pursue an aggressive growth strategy over the next 10 years, we may have up to 220 congregations, up from 53 today.

■ **Kathy Clark** noted that we currently have seven TAP programs. She is exploring the possibility of establishing four more programs.

■ **Gerri Hudson** reported that 26 of our 53 congregations submitted in their yearbook forums for 2007. She continues to work on developing a database of the conference, its pastors, officers and leaders.

■ **Tim Downs** reported that his time is being spent on the capital campaign development, pastoral searches and representing the Conference and Association meetings. He is also involved in several conversations around fostering greater collaboration among the associations and the conference.

■ The board voted to authorize the formation of a Ministry Task Force. The members are **Roy Bain, Elizabeth Clement, Jennifer Crane, Allen Mullinax, and Tom Baird**. Their responsibilities will be to administer theological scholarship program, exercise oversight for

ministers in private therapeutic practice and assisting in the follow up on the Ministry Issues Pronouncement Implementation.

■ **Gary Spencer** has agreed to be nominated to serve on the Board of Trustees of **Talladega College**. Gary is a member at **First Congregational UCC Atlanta**, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Southeast Conference.

■ The board acted to recommend that two resolutions be approved at the Conference Annual Meeting; which will resolve and declare the Southeast Conference a whole earth conference, and to resolve and declare nuclear weapons a danger.

■ **Tim Downs** reported that Local Church Ministries of the UCC has offered to pay half of the salary for **Cameron Trimble**, beginning in June 2008, so that she can serve as a consultant to other conferences in the UCC in new church development.

The initial steps of the assessing the feasibility and planning in depth interviews to refine the **proposed capital campaign for the Southeast Conference** are nearing completion. All the committees and boards of the Conference have been interviewed, and their feedback is being consolidated. The next step is to identify 55 key leaders of the Conference to be interviewed for their input on our initial findings. These interviews will be conducted over the course of the summer.

The Alabama Tennessee Association held its Annual Meeting in Huntsville on April 4. **The United Church UCC, Huntsville** was generous with its hospitality and warm welcome! **Felix Carrion**, newly appointed national staff person for the Still Speaking Ministry presented the keynote on the theme “Congregational Vitality.” Responders including **Oveta White** from Unity UCC, Montgomery **Bob Hurst** United Church UCC, **Cindy Andrews Looper**, Holy Trinity Community UCC, Nashville, and **Angie Wright**, Beloved Community UCC, Birmingham. As noted above, the Association also approved **Chrissy Cataldo** for ordination. Tim Downs installed the officers of the Association. The officers elected at this meeting included **Jeanne Elrod** member of Pleasant Hill Community UCC, TN. **Marilyn Jones** member of First Congregational UCC, Birmingham, **Aundrea Crum** of Unity UCC Montgomery, and **Jennifer Crane** of Brookmeade Congregational UCC, Nashville

Grace to You and Peace

From the Conference Minister

Dear Friends,

I write to you on the cusp of summer, about Sabbath. Carol and I have discussed vacation plans, and my mind is turning to the hope for a more leisurely pace for the coming months. I am a part of conversations about clergy self-care and burn out. Loren Mead writes about the decline of the blue laws as marking the secularization of our society, and the beginning of the decline of the influence of the church. Sabbath, the seventh day of rest, is important enough to be named in the Ten Commandments. It was understood by the Israelites as a day of “quieting the heart.”

And yet, Sabbath is more than rest it is a time of restoration and a time of gratitude. For the ancient Israelites, Sabbath during the harvest season was a time of offering the first sheaf of the harvest. Every seventh year in Israel was a sabbatical year, when the untilled fruitage of the fields and vineyards were to be left for the poor, the widows and orphans to gather for them-selves. It was also the year when Israelites were encouraged to release all male slaves, and cancel all debts. Whether this was observed in practice remains an open question. Every 50th year (the year after seven times seven) was the year of Jubilee, when all slaves were to be freed; all land returned to the original owners, all debts canceled.

When we reduce Sabbath to being simply to a day of rest, we miss the point. Sabbath is a time of restorative justice. Sabbath has implications for us concerning how we live on this earth and how we live with one another. Have we allowed our fields to lie fallow, our waters to run clean, our air to blow clear? In this economic season when we are deeply aware of the growing divide between the very rich and poor; have we spoken to the ways our society is to mend this breach.

I invite you this summer to consider ways, not only to “quiet your heart”, to have restoring rest, but also ways in which to restore balance in your life, in the ways in which you live on this earth, and in relation to others as a part of this frenetic and consuming society. Peace be with you...

Peace,
Tim Downs
Timothy C. Downs
Conference Minister



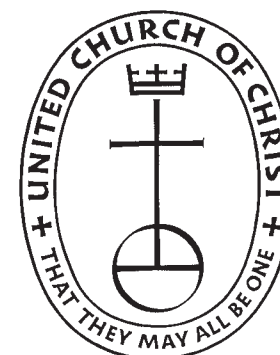
Southeast Conference United Church of Christ
1330 West Peachtree Street Suite 344 Atlanta, GA 30309

www.secucc.org
(404) 607-1993 local
(800) 807-1993 outside Atlanta
(404) 607-7939 facsimile

Editors: Rev. Cameron Trimble and Dr. Timothy Downs
Contributing Editor: Rev. Kathy Clark
Layout Editor: Mrs. Jo-Ann Trott

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For additional information on any articles or activities, contact Tim Downs at tdowns@secucc.org or call the conference office at (404) 607-1993, or outside the Atlanta area at (800) 807-1993.



2 VOICES & visions

Sabbath ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

As I made Jewish friends along the way in Europe and in the United States, I have gotten curious what the original idea of Sabbath was really about. Sitting around the Sabbath table, I listened to the prayers and songs. There was the powerful narrative that God rested on the seventh day and the emerging Sabbath law in Exodus 20 that ordered Israel's life: ⁸Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work. ¹⁰But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.

As I listened to these powerful words, I got reminded of how my Jewish friends and I were celebrating the story of Israel who was able to keep their identity in JHWH throughout the centuries through tremendous odds and adversities. In the weekly celebration of Sabbath, all Jewish believers celebrate the glory of their creator God. They remember collectively the special calling that God has placed on them as a nation and as God's people.

Leaving my friends' Sabbath table, I often came away wondering: How can we as Christians learn from the tradition that birthed us? What is the special calling that God has placed on us? What is the meaning of Sabbath for the Christian church in the 21st century?

I started looking around and I found Christian books that suggested practical exercises of how to keep Sabbath time: They ranged from keeping certain rituals to practicing mindfulness. Other authors suggested retreats and meditation as the answer to the Christian Sabbath crisis. There seemed to be a whole market teaching pastors and parishioners how to keep the Sabbath. I observed that many church leaders were preaching and neither teaching the Sabbath ideal, but neither their own nor the parishioners' hectic lifestyle changed. I must admit that those ideals and practical suggestions left me somewhat frustrated. As a full-time working mother of four year old twin girls who runs a household and supports her husband with a new church start, I do not even get enough sleep every night. How can those postmodern books talk about adding rituals to my life, or just "resting" and taking time out? Great ideas, I thought, but impossible, given my current life situation. I must admit I was hearing those books as once again imposing new laws on me, instead of offering me relief.

There must be more to Sabbath, than me adding another duty to my life. There must be something that my German tradition missed in calling any activity on Sunday as "sinful". There must be something that the secular world has lost in its endless consumerism and high productivity cult. There must be something about Sabbath that the new wave of "how to" books have missed. But what is it?

In my search for the meaning of Sabbath, I found a quote that touched me deep within my soul. Wayne Muller writes (in "Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest") *"The Sabbath rocks us and holds us until we remember who we are."*

These words reach me as a postmodern woman and clergy deep down in that place where I am weary and

Cover Story Cont'd.

burned out. It touches me as a mother who often feels captive and lost in the daily demands of life. It speaks to me as a chaplain, educator and pastor who cares every day for so many, but who hardly remembers what it means "to be rocked or held".

"The Sabbath rocks and holds us" — this is not the image of my childhood where Sabbath meant a place of discipline and law. Instead of being a place of restriction, this image of Sabbath offers a place of refuge, a place of warmth and belonging, soft arms of comfort around me, and a voice saying "Do not be afraid, you are mine". In God's holding space I can find my identity. Here I can feel like I can be myself. Here I can belong. I wonder how can the church become a place that mirrors God's holding?

"Until we remember who we are"... Sometimes I forget who I am, when life rushes me, when work demands so much from me, and my family consumes my every breath and energy; I am getting caught in the cycle of productivity around me. I become breathless and aimless. I am losing myself in all the important things that need to be done. Yes, even ministry and family can become part of this endless productivity cycle. As a wife, mother, pastor, educator and friend, I sometimes find myself captive and in "exile", surrounded by the customs of a society that worships profit and productivity. I find myself enslaved by the demands of everyday life and by my own expectations and habits. And sometimes I experience church the same way as caught in cycles of productivity and stress, enslaved by high expectations of activism and restlessness.

God as the Sabbath voice says: "Let me rock you, let me hold you — be still. Just for a moment or for ten minutes, an hour or for a day. Just be still and allow to be held. Allow, me, Your God, to surround you from all sides. Be still. — And then remember who you are and remember whose you are — For you are mine".

This is the voice that invites us to a deep intimacy with God. It is the voice that "leads us to green pastures and besides still waters". Sabbath is the place where I restore my identity in God. It is the place where I let go of the endless cycle of doing and producing and where I receive. It is the place within and without where I find refuge from a society that worships endless productivity. My value, my worth before God does not depend on how much I earn or how much I have accomplished at the end of my day.

Our Sabbath identity lies in the deep assurance that we are enough, that we are held and loved beyond measure by the God who created us and who looks tenderly at us and at creation saying "It is all good, let us now rest together". And this is the Sabbath identity that God calls the church into. Will we hear the God still speaking and will we accept this invitation?

Dorothea Lotze-Kola is a German native and former ECU minister who immigrated to the US ten years ago. She lives in Tucker, GA with her husband Lewis Kola and her twin girls Rachel and Grace. Dorothea and Lewis are co-pastoring a new UCC church start Emmanuel Christian Ministries (ecmucc.org) in Tucker, GA. For the past 7 years Dorothea worked as a NICU chaplain and ACPE supervisor at the North Atlanta CPE Center.



Gleanings from the Pastors' Retreat

St Simon's Island, March 26-29, 2008

What are the top ten things that pastors and their families desire most when on retreat? Here are one person's grateful reflections on the most recent Pastors' Retreat.

1. Naps! Pastors in particular seemed to arrive at the retreat tired from their travels, from busy lives and from ministry leading up to the Easter season. This well-planned event (thanks to Kathy Clark, Cameron Trimble, and Lynn Bujnak) was tailored and sometimes re-worked to allow for plenty of extra sleep.

2. Free Time. What a beautiful place to simply relax and contemplate what to do next. While at Epworth by the Sea, some enjoyed walks, shopping excursions, time at the beach, reading for pleasure and more naps!

3. Time Alone. How nice to have quality time to renew and reconnect with oneself, a partner, and children (or away from children!).

4. Worship. What a lovely experience to start and finish the day with worship together. We enjoyed dulcimer music with Lynn, songs with Cameron, beautiful hymns, prayers, Holy Communion and nightly bedtime stories.

5. Free Play! Some played tennis, while others biked around the island, explored the towns and shops nearby, read mysteries, enjoyed board games or played in the Epworth gift shop. We all enjoyed some episodes of the "Vicar of Dibley."

6. Creative Opportunities. We enjoyed creating collages to reveal "our truest selves" (by the way, an excellent craft for the artistically challenged). We also played with clay, music, ribbons and markers and many captured some of the weekend experience in photographs.

7. Good food. What a gift to eat food prepared by someone else! We lingered around the table after meals talking and getting to know one another. We enjoyed a cookout provided for us as well as lunches out around town. The last night we enjoyed a wonderful seafood dinner together at "Mullet Bay."

8. Deepening Connections. Some were familiar to one another, others met for the first time. How helpful it was to share how we take care of ourselves and our relationships. And how delightful it was to learn who likes to cook or to garden, who's from "the swamp" nearby (or the marsh as we were taught to call it), who loves animals, who likes to build things, who has grandchildren, who's a "foodie" (and what is that anyway?), who enjoys art projects and who'd prefer a structured task.... Especially meaningful were discussions revealing personal histories and ongoing struggles and successes.

9. Quiet Time. It was like cool water on a hot day to have time to think, walk, reflect, pray, journal, and sleep some more....

10. Sabbath Time. Perhaps to sum up the gift of the entire time together, how refreshing it was to be given a beautiful place to rest, relax, play and enjoy one another. Thank you Southeastern Conference and old and new friends for the blessing of this time together.

Anita Hauenstein



concerns&celebrations

Tewana LeCounte, pastor of **Midway Congregational UCC** has announced her resignation effective May, 2008.

Oveta White, assistant minister at **Unity, UCC**, Montgomery, has announced her retirement from the Air Force, where she achieved the rank of Lt. Col. Oveta is seeking to become a Student-in-Care of the Alabama Tennessee Association. Her retirement party will be held on May 18.

We were saddened by the death of **Kwai Chang**, whose memorial service was held on April 27. Kwai was a member of **Central Congregational UCC**, Atlanta. He spent his career teaching comparative religions at Agnes Scott College, Decatur, GA. Kwai was known for his thoughtful nature, his searching mind and was an outstanding teacher. Participating in a memorial service was **Norman Rates**, retired chaplain of Spelman College and was Kwai's classmate at Yale Divinity School. Kwai is survived by his wife Miyo.

April 25-26 at the Annual Meeting of the Georgia-South Carolina Association, the Ecclesiastical Council took the following actions: **Marlene Underwood** and **Stephanie Crumpton** members of **Sankofa UCC, Atlanta** were approved for ordination pending a call. **Andrew Kim** co-pastor of **Salim UCC**, Roswell, was approved for ordination, **Heidi Schuler** and **Rachel Small** members of **Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta** were approved for ordination pending a call, and **Elizabeth Lorick**, a member of **Garden of Grace UCC, Columbia, SC** was approved to be a commissioned minister; four of these candidates come from new churches!

On April 20, **David Brown** was installed as the pastor of **Pilgrim Congregational UCC**, Chattanooga, TN.; representing the Association was **Tom Baird** Chair of the Association Church and Ministry Committee.

April 13 **Steve Sterner** was installed as Acting Executive Minister of Local Church Ministries of the United Church of Christ at a worship service in Cleveland, OH. Preaching for the occasion was **Susie Smith** pastor of peace Congregational UCC Clemson South Carolina,

and **Tim Downs** represented the Georgia South Carolina Association. Steve and Judy Sterner hold their local church membership at **Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta** and regularly attend **Peace Congregational UCC**, in Clemson, SC.

Joel Alvin, ordained in the PC (USA), has been called to serve as interim minister at **Central Congregational UCC Atlanta**; he began his ministry mid-April.

April 5, the Alabama Tennessee Association at its annual meeting in Huntsville, acting in ecclesiastical Council; **Chrissy Cataldo** was approved for ordination pending a call. Chrissy is a member of **Church of the Savior, Knoxville, TN**.

Terry McCreary, pastor of **Community Congregational UCC, Montgomery** has announced his resignation effective August, 2008. He has accepted a position working for the Montgomery school system.

Joe Ingle, a member of **Brookmeade Congregational UCC**, Nashville, has announced the release of his book "Last Rights". The story is about 12 condemned men and one condemned woman serving on death row. For over three decades Joe Ingle has argued eloquently against the death penalty. Some years ago he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for this work. The book is available in bookstores everywhere.

Marvin Morgan, Associate Pastor at **First Congregational UCC, Atlanta**, also the coordinator of the faith community support for the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union undertaking to organize the workers of Smithfield; a meat packing and food giant headquartered in North Carolina, has announced an effort to encourage the TV personality, Paula Dean to cease her association with Smithfield.

Phil Price has announced that he will be installed as pastor of Sandy Springs Christian Church in Sandy Springs, GA this summer. Phil had previously served as interim minister at **Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta**.

If you have items to include in Concerns and Celebrations, please contact Tim Downs at tdowns@secucc.org.

resources

Resources related to "Sacred Conversations" and Conversations Concerning Jeremiah Wright:

■ UCC General Minister and President **John Thomas** has called for a day of sacred conversations about race and America, to be held May 18th. There are a wide range of resources available at www.ucc.org. Click on the picture on the home page entitled "Sacred Conversations" to find articles, worship resources, bible studies, and more to equip yourselves and your congregations for this important engagement.

■ **Dr. Ken Samuel**, pastor and founder of Victory Church (UCC), Stone Mountain, has prepared a statement on the controversy surrounding Jeremiah Wright. For this important perspective from a UCC African-American leader, contact me at tdowns@secucc.org.

■ The following are links that I have found helpful in engaging the conversations concerning the recent events surrounding Jeremiah Wright and Barack Obama:

<http://blog.beliefnet.com/godspolitics/2008/04/wright-exfactor-by-diana-butle.html>

Diana Butler Bass

http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/guestvoices/2008/04/the_black_church_as_cultural_c.html

James Forbes

http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/guestvoices/2008/04/black_church_called_to_lift_ev.html

Cheryl Sanders

http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/guestvoices/2008/04/continuous_crisis_in_the_black.html

Frederick Haynes

http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/eboo_patel/2008/04/who_is_jeremiah_wright.html

Eboo Patel

http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/susan_brooks_thistlethwaite/2008/04/memo_to_white_america_respect.html

Sue Thistlethwaite

<http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/>

Willis Elliott

Resources for Christian Education:

■ Curriculum Catalog for *Seasons of the Spirit*, a curriculum designed to support faith communities and families in their life together

■ Sample curriculum for *Seasons of the Spirit*, Pentecost 1, May 18-August 31, 2008

Resources for New Church Development:

■ Information for new church planter basic training on August 12-15, 2008 in Atlanta, GA.

Registration: \$550, seminary credit \$850, housing \$450. For online registration go to <http://www.ucc.org/newchurch/new-church-training.html> and for more information contact crimble@secucc.org.

■ *New Times, the UCC New Ideas for New Churches*, a publication for new church developers, contact tdowns@secucc.org.

Resources for Ecology and Stewardship:

■ *Faith/Environment, and Indeed it is Very Good* worship resources

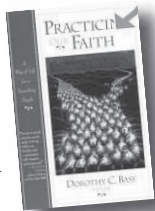
■ *Faith/Environment, and Indeed...* Study Resources

For additional information on any articles, activities or resources, contact Tim Downs at tdowns@secucc.org or call the conference office at (404) 607-1993, or outside the Atlanta area at (800) 807-1993.

recommendedreading

As I embark on my sabbatical this summer, here are a few of the books I will be relishing.

Practicing our Faith by Dorothy C. Bass, ed. Published in 1997 by Jossey-Bass.



Fourteen contributors discuss various religious practices grounded in daily life yet shaped by centuries of Christian community and tradition including honoring the body, keeping Sabbath, dying well, discernment, and singing our lives. The book is addressed not only to seekers on journeys of the spirit and Christians trying to live their faith more fully; it is also addressed to "people of every faith who are concerned about human flourishing...."

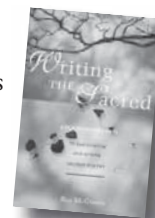
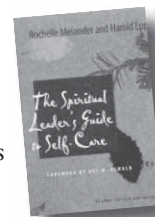
The Spiritual Leader's Guide to Self-Care by Rochelle Melander and Harold Eppley Published in 2002 by Alban Institute.

Clergy couple, Rochelle Melander and Harold Eppley, have written a practical, hands-on approach to reflection and transformation through self-care. Outlining a 52

week process that takes readers through connecting with self, others and God, the text presents challenges that will help guide readers (individually or as a group) through healthy self-examination and change. This is a very usable book with plenty of resources suggested for further growth.

Writing the Sacred: A Psalm Inspired Path to Appreciating and Writing Sacred Poetry by Ray McGinnis. Published in 2005 by Northstone Publishing.

This text is a celebration of the spiritual quest, an appreciation of the psalms, and a writing workshop, all in one. It includes new psalms and poems from Jewish, Islamic, and Christian writers and contemporary poets, and invites readers to explore their own creative sides in expressing and responding to the depths of human experience in the context of Divine Providence.



Overflow

The **Georgia South Carolina Association** held its Annual Meeting, April 25- 26 in Midway, GA hosted by **Midway Congregational UCC**. The program included tours of the historic Midway museum and introductions to the rich Congregational history in the area. Much of the time together was spent in Ecclesiastical Council. The meeting ended with a service of communion led by retiring moderator **Kim Buchanan**, pastor of **Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta**. Succeeding Kim as moderator of the Association was **Susan Dunn** of **Circular Congregational UCC**, Charleston SC. Elected as treasurer of the Association; **Charles Joye** of **Garden of Grace UCC**, Columbia SC. **Ginnie Ferrell** of **Central Congregational UCC**; Atlanta was elected as an at-large member of the executive committee. The Association unanimously approved of a new constitution and bylaws, bringing them fully into compliance with the constitution and bylaws of both the national setting, and the Conference.

Barbara Steinhaus has announced that she has been elected to the Board of Directors for the **UCC Musicians National Network**. Barbara is a member of **Central Congregational UCC Atlanta**, and is seeking to connect musicians from across the Conference for a conversation, and perhaps mutual resourcing. If you are a church musician in the Southeast Conference or you could pass this on to the musician serving in your congregation, please encourage them to contact Barbara at bsteinhaus@secucc.org.

Dates to pencil in your calendars:
Stewardship 101: Action Steps to a Successful Fall Season!

May 16-17 at Pilgrim Congregational UCC in Chattanooga, TN. Tim Downs and Nancy Chorpenning will be leading a workshop to equip the renewal stewardship in your congregation. If you need hotel accommodations, please contact us and we will make the arrangements. We are asking that a pastor and at least two lay leaders come from each participating congregation. Cost: \$60 per congregation. For registration, contact stewardship@secucc.org.

Southeast Conference is committed to making leadership training opportunities available to all of our clergy and lay leaders. We hope you've noticed, the leadership development workshop **May 23 for Youth Ministry Leaders** in our congregations, and of course the new church leadership development workshops in August, which the Southeast Conference co-hosts with the national UCC evangelism team. Both of these opportunities are introduced on the Southeast Conference website www.secucc.org

The Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference is around the corner!

June 13-14: Taking place in Pleasant Hill TN, this will be a gathering you will not want to miss. Each congregation is entitled to bring a minimum of three delegates, and unlimited visitors. All authorize (ordained licensed and commissioned) ministers are delegates to the annual meetings and therefore are expected to be present. Registration will be available online, please go to the Southeast Conference website for registration and more details about the schedule of the annual meeting.

A unique opportunity for pastors of congregations wishing to affiliate with the United Church of Christ!

This summer, **July 14-16, and August 4-6** the Southeast conference will open host convocation for the pastors and ministerial staffs of congregations exploring affiliation with the United Church of Christ. We have been approached over the last several years by over 10 congregations who expressed an interest in affiliating with us. The purpose of this convocation is to foster conversation between interested people, as well as with national leaders of the United Church of Christ including John Thomas, General Minister and President. Included in the leadership in this event will be leaders and staff from the Southeast Conference. This event will satisfy the UCC history and polity requirement for pastors who seek authorization. Further information will be available on the Southeast Conference website shortly, and invitations will be going out to specific individuals as well. For further information contact tdowns@secucc.org.



AROUND THE CONFERENCE:

News from Local Congregations

The ship *Amistad*, will be visiting the city of Charleston, SC upon its return across the Atlantic from its visits to Europe. **Circular Congregational UCC** will be hosting a community-wide **interfaith worship service at 11:00A on May 17th** to celebrate the *Amistad* and its significant mission. Circular has also announced the publication of the definitive history of the congregation, established in 1681, the oldest congregation of the reformed tradition on the Southern coast. If you would like to see this book, or want to learn more about the process in which the church engaged to write this remarkable history contact Joanne Calhoun at js_calhoun@bellsouth.net. Joanne has much to share about the researching and writing of a congregation's history.

Covenant Congregational Church, a new church start by Piedmont College on its campus to reach the community surrounding **Demorest, GA** has announced that it is closing its doors.

Pleasant Hill Community UCC, TN, reported that over 200 people attended their highly successful weekend event featuring John Dominic Crossan in April.

United Church Cookeville (UCC), TN has announced it is undertaking a search for a full-time pastor to succeed Tom Eckert.

Many know that the UCC has three congregations in the Atlanta area: **Sankofa UCC**, **Rush Memorial UCC**, and **First Congregational UCC**. None sustained any damage from the tornadoes last month.

Sankofa UCC was pleased to host a surprise visit from Jeremiah Wright as their preacher on the last Sunday in April; Rev. Wright was in Atlanta for another engagement. Sankofa is a mission of the Southeast Conference, Covenant UCC, South Holland, IL, and Trinity UCC, Chicago.

Community Congregational UCC, Montgomery, has announced its search for a new pastor.

Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga, under the leadership of its newly installed pastor, **David Brown**, has begun a major clean up and renovation of its facility.

concerns&celebrations

We received word from **Kristin Vaughn** of her resignation as minister for youth at **Pilgrimage UCC Marietta**, to move back to her family home in North Carolina.

Congratulations to **Tom Warren**, pastor of **Pleasant Hill Community UCC**, and **Kathy Clark**, Associate Conference Minister of the Southeast Conference for having each received a grant from the Brown Foundation in support of their respective sabbatical leaves this summer.